the health of the people begins to suffer. In foodstuffs, drink, clothes, amenities, amusements, there was a good deal that Britain could give up without damage to its health. There were demands essential to the upkeep and development of a civilised community, e.g. the building of new houses or the repair and decoration of the old, which could be put off for two or three years without inflicting intolerable hardship on the community. The postponement of building operations led to a great deal of overcrowding in munition areas, but at its worst it was not comparable to the insanitary congestion of the slums. It is when deprivation becomes privation—when the cutting down cuts to the quick—that the national strength and morale become impaired. That is what happened in Russia, Germany and Austria. Could we avert a like catastrophe here ? This was our problem.

What we could sacrifice or postpone

We were faced with an inevitable reduction of our total imports. We had to ask three questions.

Three questions

First: what can the nation do without—that is, without impairing its efficiency ? Secondly : how much deprivation will it stand without perilous disgruntlement ? Thirdly : to what extent can we produce at home essential commodities hitherto brought across the seas ? This last question is dealt with in other chap-

ters. Here we are concerned with the two former questions and with the policy of import restriction framed in relation to them.

A certain restriction of imports was imposed on the country by the reduction in the tonnage available to bring them to our shores. I have spoken elsewhere of the immense demands on our shipping made by our expeditionary forces and by our Allies. Added